

Twenty-fifth Message from the President  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Colleagues,

Today is a wonderful day to celebrate over 120 students for their SIR and IN2 projects through IMSAloquium. Special thanks to our SIR team, Dr. Dave Devol, Dr. Sowmya Anjur, Dr. Brian Trainor, Cathy Cunz, and Sue Fricano in IN2 for organizing the program and making the event accessible to community members in person and remotely. I hope you were able to attend the virtual and/or in-person gatherings to honor their work. This year, I was humbled to mentor one of the SIR students, Cole Plepel, with his [mathematics project about developing a computational algorithm](#) to model large volumes of data. It was a remarkable experience for me to see him pose a question that did not have a known solution, but have confidence the eventual outcome will offer insight into solving a bigger problem in the field of computer science. Admittedly, when I saw his research proposal, I informed Cole I only understood about 75% of it; however, I was willing to give it a shot. In Cole's case, we tracked down some professors who were doing related work to offer him feedback on his algorithm(s), and then I was able to mentor him through the research and design process. One of the professors was in Denmark! The accessibility of remote subject matter experts has been a silver lining of the pandemic, and that professor believes Cole's work should be prepared for publication in a reputable journal. My mentoring experience with Cole illustrates that there are alternative models worth exploring to support success in student research.

I think about the many other students who are not involved in SIR or entrepreneurship projects. Why come to IMSA and not pursue a research project as a unique IMSA experience? It's often referenced as a highlight from our feedback surveys and alumni responses – a differentiator from what's available at their local school. I've heard different answers to this question, such as "Help sessions and office hours are on Wednesdays, so students cannot get involved in enrichment if they need help in their core classes." I've also heard, "Students need to find their own mentors, and some kids just can't find them on their own." And, I've also seen large numbers of students check out on Wednesdays for personal appointments, as if it's regarded as a flex day. Personally, I think some students are intimidated by research, thinking that it's only for the most advanced learners. Their self-efficacy sometimes limits their pursuit of unique experiences like SIR, and we need to insist they are capable. That's evidenced by a plentiful of interesting projects in MSI, and I know many of you set up inquiry-based projects in your classrooms rooted in the UNSDGs. I also believe there's also an equity gap of opportunity for CLED students, and one that requires deliberate attention

because it's not happening naturally. I think that fight is worth it. Given that most STEM professions are racially and gender imbalanced, and that mentors play an influential role in igniting students towards career paths, I think we are well-positioned to have a profound impact by getting more of our students involved in research and entrepreneurship. How we get there will be shaped by your engagement, your innovation and your influence with our students. I'm open to your ideas.

Equity in STEM and accountability to our mission is a strategic priority for the future, and access to SIR among our CLED students is an example of a desirable outcome. There are several more to share, thanks to input from many of you, our students, parents and alumni. After 13 different focus group sessions ([see notes](#)), we now have a [draft of outcomes and indicators](#) to share with the Board of Trustees at their upcoming retreat. Following that review process, we will obtain additional feedback during our accreditation visit in May to support a plan headed into next year. Here is the [white paper](#) describing the rationale behind each of these priorities and anticipated leadership hires, along with the [executive summary](#) regarding IMSA's progress in recent years.

As we lay out the "big rocks," our progress will be shaped through breakthrough ideas that are developed by you, tested by you, and improved by you to shape the future of our people and our impact with each other, across the state, and beyond. As you have questions, thoughts, feedback and inspiration for any of these priorities, don't hesitate to reach out for a conversation and a walk. My desire is that you feel closely connected to all of our strategic priorities, and want you to feel deeply passionate and committed to at least one of them. Every one of you has potential to cultivate our progress, not just for our students, but also for each other and the welfare of the Academy as a whole. I look forward to exploring that with you further in the months and years ahead.

Titans Together,

Evan

**Dr. Evan M. Glazer**

*President*